

A Cure for Spare Time

I'm pretty much unhappy about the amount of time I spend watching television. I could be outdoors having real-world experiences instead.

On the other hand, it's hot and dirty – or cold and wet – out there. As long as we're all going to be indoors for extended periods we may as well make the best use of our TV time.

Like many of you, for years I have been reading about and listening to people go on about the HBO series Game of Thrones, which recently concluded its sixth season. I had never watched it, but when LuAnn and I were in Ireland a few months ago we found a whole sub-industry specializing in taking tourists to visit GOT filming sites.

Briefly, Game of Thrones is a fantasy drama that takes place in a medieval setting that includes castles, magic, and dragons. It has a huge ensemble cast estimated to be the largest on television. According to Wikipedia, during the production of the third season alone, 257 cast names were recorded.

That's good, because a lot of characters die gruesomely. In 2012 there someone calculated an average 14 deaths per episode. In TV shows when I was growing up, there were always just a few lead characters and if one ever had to be replaced it often ended the series. In GOT your favorite character could die horribly at any moment.

The series has won 26 Primetime Emmy Awards, including the Primetime Emmy Award for Outstanding Drama Series in 2015 when it set a record for most wins for a series in a single year. Not to mention numerous other awards and nominations, including three Hugo Awards for Best Dramatic Presentation, a Peabody Award, and three Golden Globe Award nominations. Google it and you get 123 million results.

Six weeks ago, I decided to see what all the buzz was about. We already had a cable subscription to HBO, so I downloaded the HBO GO app onto my iPad and watched episode 1 from 2011. I wasn't sure what to expect, and it turned out to be graphic, gritty and brutal – right up my alley.

LuAnn and I have decidedly different tastes in entertainment. I favor car chases, explosions and gratuitous sex and violence, while she tends toward comedies, unicorns and rainbows. GOT is not the series for her, but I'm now addicted.

I'm no stranger to cable series dramas – I'm completely up to date on Starz' Black Sails (pirates!) and Outlander (highlanders!) plus Netflix' House of Cards (politics!). The problem with being current is you have to wait a whole week for the next episode and then a half-year for next season to start after the current season ends.

There's a flip-side problem with having 60 episodes at my disposal - GOT now dominates my free time. Newspapers and magazines are piling up, the lawn seldom gets mowed, and our cats are getting skinnier every day because I forget to feed them.

The good news is that I'm now halfway through season 5 and the end is in sight. The bad news is I'll soon be looking for something to take its place, and I have never seen a single episode of either Breaking Bad (5 seasons, 62 episodes) or "24" (9 seasons, 204 episodes). I have my work cut out for me.

Writers Group member Dave Parsons is now taking vitamin D supplements because he seldom goes outside these days.